No 11

A

SERMON

AGAINST

CORRUPTING

THE

WORD of GOD,

Preacht at *CHRIST CHURCH*

IN

MANCHESTER

Upon a Publick Occasion on the 11th Day of *July*, 1696.

By *Thomas Gipps* Rector of *BURY*.

Cur non ad Græcam Originem revertentes ea, quæ à vitiosis Interpretibus male reddita, vel à presumtoribus imperitis emendata perversius, vel à librariis dormitantibus aut addita sunt aut mutata, corrigimus? S. Hieronymus *Præfatione in* 4. *Evangelia ad* Damasum.

LONDON,
Printed for *Ephraim Johnston* Bookseller in *Manchester*, 1697.

TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

WILLIAM

Earl of *Derby*, Lord of *Man*, and the *Iſles*, &c.

My Lord,

I *Have been Perſwaded by ſome Private Friends, that the Publication of the following Diſcourſe is not at this time of day to be declin'd. Some People will, doubtleſs, be angry, that their foul Play is brought upon the Stage, and thus openly taxt. For this reaſon, I am bold to engage Your Lordſhip in my Intereſts, and to ſhelter my ſelf under Your Great and Honourable Name. Your Honour will (I hope) the more eaſily pardon me herein, ſince Your own Intereſt alſo is not a little concern'd. It is not my Diſpoſition to expoſe any Mans Miſtake, whilſt it keeps in doors, and contains its ſelf within any bounds of Modeſty and Privacy. In this caſe, certainly 'tis better to mourn for it in ſecret, at moſt to rebuke it in a Corner. But when 'tis made Notorious; when it boldly ſtares us in the Face and is avow'd for Truth, when an Error, which one would have hop'd was an unwilling One, is Supported by another, which muſt be Confeſt and Believ'd a wilful One: That is, when the* Presbyterian *Government (or Congre-*

gational, I can't tell which) is publickly maintain'd by a Text of Scripture manifeſtly Corrupted, ſurely 'tis high time then to make the World Senſible of the Artifice. I had ſome Years before Diſcover'd the Falſe Reading here ſpoken of, but held my peace. At length, when I found that the Corruption, like a Gangren, had ſpread its ſelf into ſeveral Editions of the Bible here in England, and, God knows, how many in Scotland, and there vouch't for Good, I could not prevail with my ſelf to be ſilent any longer, and I hope the ſame Good Zeal will Inſpire Your Honour with a Reſolution to Diſcountenance ſuch Injuries Offer'd unto the Holy Word of God. Nor is this the only Inſtance of the kind. In the Diſſenters Petition for Peace above years ſince, Acts 15. 18. v. is thus cited---To lay upon you no greater burden than neceſſary things, that ſmall word theſe being cunningly left out meerly to ſupport their Propoſition, Mr. B--- who drew up the Petition, and ſince has been publickly charg'd for thus abuſing the Scripture, tho' he forgot not to Acquaint us with the moſt trivial, yea ridiculous, Paſſages of his Life, yet had not the Ingenuity to confeſs his Error, nor yet the Courage to Paliate it with any Excuſe. My Lord, I have now done, after I ſhall have made a publick Acknowledgment, as I now do, of the many great ſingular Favours receiv'd from Your Honour thro' the Courſe of allmoſt thirty years Service, and have alſo farther aſſur'd You, that I am as in Duty bound,

Champ. Chal. accepted by Dr. *Hook* late Vicar of *Halifax.*

Right Honourable,

Your Lordſhips, Moſt Humble,
and Moſt Obedient Servant, and
Chaplain, *THO. GIPPS.*

Prov. xxx. 6. v.

Add not thou unto his Word leſt he reprove thee, and thou be found a Liar.

THE Argument I am about to treat of is weighty, and not eaſily compriz'd in one ſingle Diſcourſe. It will therefore concern me to huſband my time as thriftily as may be, and chiefly to lay aſide all thoughts of further Preface.

The Text is a Negative Precept forbidding all manner of Corrupting the Holy Scriptures, and that under a double Caution:

1. *Leſt God reprove thee* for it, a terrible Intimation.

2. Leſt *thou be found a Liar*, One of the moſt deteſtable Sins in the ſight both of God and Man. That by *His Word* is meant the Word of God is manifeſt from the Verſe foregoing--- *Every Word of God is pure*, Then it follows---*Add not thou unto his Word*, i. e. to the Word of God. That we at this day are to underſtand hereby the written Word or Scriptures is not to be queſtion'd, there being now no other Word of God, but that which is *written for our Inſtruction, upon whom the ends of the world are come.* v. 5. 1 Cor. 10. 11.

When the Prophet *Agur* ſays, *Add not*; He muſt be ſupply'd thus, neither diminiſh from the Word. For ſo the Parallel places in the Mar-
Deut. 4.2. gent do warrant, *Ye ſhall not add unto the Word,*
& 12.32. *neither ſhall ye diminiſh ought from it. Thou ſhalt not add thereunto neither diminiſh from it*, ſaid *Moſes* to the *Iſraelites*: For the Holy Spirit does not always expreſs things to the full, but leaves 'em oft times to be made up out of ſome other places; hinting here but briefly what elſewhere he more fully ſets forth. For which reaſon therefore I would read the Text thus, *Add not thou unto his Word, neither diminiſh ought from it.* And then (as I ſaid) the Text is levell'd againſt all manner of Corrupting the Word. One Eminent Inſtance of which I ſhall produce by and by, the chief Reaſon of my undertaking this Subject. I will confine my ſelf unto the Precept, in handling whereof my method ſhall be.

1. To lay before you Negatively ſome Caſes, which though they may ſeem to be, yet are not adding to, nor diminiſhing from, the Word.

2. I will ſhew poſitively when we either add or diminiſh, or both, contrary to the Precept here given. 1. Negatively, *&c.* And that in the following caſes: It is not an adding unto the Word, when we explain and fill up any Paſſage of Scripture out of ſome other places---- wherein we find the Truth more fully expreſt.

For

For in this consists the very Office and Duty of a Preacher, and Explainer of the Scripture. And this I plead for my sufficient Warrant in taking the liberty of supplying the Text out of other Parallel Places, as you see I have done. 2. It is not diminishing from the Word, when we omit the *Hebrew* Titles of the *Psalms*; Nor is it adding to the Word when we prefix the *Latine* Titles to 'em.

There was of late a Gentleman who in defence of Nonconformists alledg'd against the establisht Worship. "That in the *Psalms* used "in the Liturgy are left out the Antient *Hebrew* "Titles, which are (*says he*) Original and Parts "of the H. Scripture, having a tendency to- "wards the unfolding the Mysteries therein "contain'd. And he quarrels at the *Latine* Titles prefixt thereunto. But it were well if the Dissenters, whose Cause he pleads, would first prove that those *Hebrew* Titles are Original and Essential Parts of the Holy Scripture, and then if they are so, that they would give us a Reason why in that very Translation, which they approve and make use of, those Original Titles are indeed retain'd, but in the *Hebrew* Language still in many *Psalms* and unintelligible to the People; or why the Translation of 'em into plain *English*, is not always placed at the head of the *Psalm*, but often cast into the

Mr. De Laune *in Lr. to Dr.* Calamy *page* 43.

Margent, as if they were ſomething elſe than Scripture; neither of which ought to be, if theſe Titles be part of, and ſo uſeful to wards, the unfolding the Senſe of the *Pſalm*. And hereupon I aſk whether this is not a ſufficient Intimation, that they are not of a Certainty, what they are confidently affirm'd to be, *Viz.* Original. I would moreover be reſolv'd what thoſe Myſteries are which thoſe *Hebrew* Titles do unfold: Whether the Diſſenters read 'em to their Congregations, and if they do, whether the People are one jot the wiſer or underſtand the Myſteries of the Pſalter, ever a whit the better for 'em. Laſtly, I deſire to know, why they do not affix 'em, or rather the Tranſlation of 'em to the front of the *Pſalms*. But if they deſire to be excuſed theſe ſmaller faults, be it ſo yet, *Æquum eſt peccatis veniam poſcentes reddere rurſus.*

In Metre and likewiſe ſing 'em: All which ought to be done, if they are eſſential Parts of the Pſalms

Let then the World judge, whether this Author ſought not an occaſion of quarrel againſt us and yet found none, except what involves his own Party in the ſame condemnation. As for the *Latine* Titles they are (any one may know,) but the firſt words of every *Pſalm*, and ſo by conſequence undoubted Parts of Scripture, as edifying too as the *Hebrew* Titles are. In ſhort, that they are borrow'd from the *Romaniſts*, may be granted and defended too. For ſo were the *Hebrew* Titles from the Modern *Jews*.

Yea the whole Hebrew Bible.

'Tis

'Tis not, I confeſs, worth while to take Notice of ſuch Stuff as this, and I am really aſham'd of the Digreſſion. But the Peeviſhneſs of an Adverſary will ſometimes extort a Reply, tho' it deſerves it not; and it may be fit now and then to let the Contentious ſee their own Folly and Frowardneſs.

I conclude then that the leaving out the *Hebrew* Titles is no diminiſhing, nor the affixing the *Latine* an adding to, the Word of God.

3. It is not diminiſhing from the Word, when we, intending to feed the flock of Chriſt with the ſincere Milk of the Word, read ſome few Verſes of a Chap. omitting the reſt for that time. The forementioned Writer excepts againſt the reading the Epiſtles and Goſpels, telling us, thus. *De L. page* 44.

" That 'tis a curtailing or mangling the Scrip-
" tures, that thereby they become quite another
" thing than the Evangeliſts intended in the
" Goſpels, or the Apoſtles in the Epiſtles, alto-
" gether ruining the Scope and Connexion in
" divers places. It is the manner of ſome Men to accuſe ſtoutly, and in the general without offering any one Inſtance to ſhew the Truth of their objection. For tho' nothing be prov'd, yet ſomething will ſtick, and at this rate who can hope to be found innocent?

But it might upon ſecond Thoughts have been remembred, That the Diſſenters 'emſelves oft-times

oft-times ſing but two, ſometimes but one Staff of a *Pſalm*, and yet this is not a curtailing and mangling the *Pſalms*: That the Scriptures were not divided by the inſpired Pen-men into Chapters, as well as not into theſe ſhorter Paragraphs or Sections, which we call Epiſtles and Goſpels, that there is a Connexion many times between Chapter and Chapter, and yet the reading of a ſingle Chapter is not accounted a making the Scripture to become quite another thing than was intended. *Loripedem Rectus deridat, Æthiopem Albus.* Surely it might have been remembred, that there are two ſorts of Senſes in every ſmall Section of Scripture.

1. A Relative.

2. A Separate or Independent Senſe. The Relative Senſe (it's true) cannot be underſtood without the Neighbouring Parts; but however is not thereby quite ruin'd. In ſaying ſo the Gentleman o'reſhot himſelf, and by objecting too much, prov'd nothing at all againſt us. For to omit is not to deſtroy. And if it be neceſſary to read as much Scripture at one time, as there is a Connexion between the Parts, then muſt the Diſſenters read many Chapters together, peradventure whole Books, and ſing ſome of the longeſt *Pſalms* without Intermiſſion, which is impoſſible.

Finally then, if the Diſſenters can ſhew any one

one Epiſtle or Goſpel, wherein the Relative Senſe is altogether ruin'd, or the ſeparate Senſe in any wiſe injur'd, I promiſe then to ſubſcribe to the Objectors judgment in this and all others his raſh accuſations of us. When O Lord, O when ſhall we find Truth and Peace and Sincerity upon the Earth? When ſhall all unneceſſary Squabbles ceaſe from among us Men?

4. It is not adding to the Word, when ſeveral Paſſages tending to the ſame purpoſe, tho' found in diſtant places or different Books of Scripture, yet are caſt into one complex Sentence or Sentences, as it were depending one of another. The ſo oft mention'd Gentleman Objects; *That in the Liturgy Tranſlation of the* Pſalms, *three whole verſes are foiſted into the* 14*th* Pſalm *immediately after the* 3*d* ℣. They run thus "Their Throat is an "open Sepulchre, with their Tongues have they "deceiv'd thee: Poiſon of Aſps is under their "Lips, &c. Which (ſays he,) are not in any of the "Original Copies. But hold here I pray. Have not the inſpired Pen-men of the New Teſtament quoted ſome Texts out of the Old from remote Places and Authors, twiſting 'em together as one entire and complex Paſſage? Doubtleſs there are Examples of this kind to be met with; I will content my ſelf with a ſingle one. *Then ſhall be brought to paſs the ſaying that is written, Death is ſwallow'd up in Victory. O Death, where is thy Sting?* 1 Cor. 15. 54, 55.

Vbi ſupra.

O Grave where is thy Victory? And yet this Saying, being borrow'd Part from the Prophet I ſay, and
Iſa. 25. 8. Part from *Hoſeah*, is by St. *Paul* cited as one ſin-
Hoſ. 13. 14. gle and intire Teſtimony of Scripture. In like manner, theſe three Verſes are to be found at leaſt ſcatter'd up and down in the Book of *Pſalms*, part
See Iſ 59. 7, 8. in the 5*th Pſ.* 9*th v.* and part in the 140*th Pſ.* 2*d* and 3*d* Verſes.
Deut. 32. 33. If this anſwers not Expectation, I add further, That St. *Paul* in the 3*d* Chap. to the *Romans*, has ſubjoyn'd the 3. Objected Verſes, immediately to the 3*d v.* of the 14*th Pſ.* " As it is written " (ſays he,) There is none that doth good, no not " one: Their throat is an open Sepulchre & ſo on " to the end of the three objected Verſes. Surely St. *Paul's* Epiſtle to the *Rom.* may at leaſt excuſe, if not juſtifie, this ſuppos'd Alteration of the *Pſalms*. It is rather to be feared that the Objector himſelf had a deſign upon the Scripture: Whilſt he is accuſing us for adding thereto, himſelf is diminiſhing from it; and rather than ſpare us, is calling into Queſtion the great Apoſtle of the *Gentiles* for adding to the Word.

But above all, with what Effrontery could this learned Man & ſkill'd in the Original Languages (as he pretends,) tell his Readers, that thoſe three Verſes are not in any of the Original Copies? Perhaps his own Party has hitherto believ'd him, but if they will give me leave, I'll open their eyes

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in a very few words. For (not to take Notice of that abſurd ſaying *Original Copies*, which he would or ſhould have ſaid Copies of the Original,) what are we to think of the *Greek*? That certainly is to be accounted One of the Originals, if there be more than One, as himſelf ſeems to intimate. And there I read juſt as I read in the Liturgy Tranſlation, and as I read in St. *Paul*. Again I might ſay with the learned *Voſſius*, that the *Greek* Copy, for ought I know, is of as good Authority as the *Hebrew* at this day is, and for my Reaſons I ſend you to his Hiſtory of the 70 Tranſlation: Only take this along with you, that (as has been already noted) St. *Paul* (which alſo the other holy Writers of the New Teſtament generally do in other places) follows the *Greek*, and not the *Hebrew* Copy in citing this 14*th Pſalm*, which is no contemptible Argument for the Authority of the 70. Tranſlation. Briefly, we have this further Advantage on our ſide, that 'tis more Probable the three controverted Verſes might be left out of the *Hebrew* Copies, by the careleſneſs of the Tranſcribers, than thruſt into the *Greek* by the Tranſlators. 'Tis eaſier (ſuppoſing 'em both honeſt and ſincere) for Tranſcribers to omit, than Tranſlators to add ſo much together of their own head.

5. 'Tis not adding to, nor diminiſhing from, nor corrupting the Word, when we Tranſlate it into Vulgar Tongues. All Chriſtians have done

so. Yea the *Romanists* 'emselves in former Ages did so, tho' of late, they have been contrary minded for fear forsooth of mistaking the Word, or corrupting it. O Fools and slow of heart! One of the Ancients has affirm'd, that the *version of the Scriptures into many Languages, is the best way to preserve 'em uncorrupt*. Besides, why do they suffer the Word to be Transcribed or Printed at all or in any Language? Doubtless the Word of God may be corrupted by Transcribing or Printing it, as well as by Translating it. Transcribing we know was, & Printing now a days is the Work often of ignorant & mechanical Men, who are more liable to mistakes: but Translating is the business of the Learned. Ay, but St. *Jerom* confest himself subject to mistakes in Translating the Scripture. Very good! and yet he Translated it for the use of the *Latine* Christians, and his Translation is for the most part read unto this day. Why then may not a Learned Priest or Bishop now a days render it into the *Italian*, as well as *Jerom* formerly did into the *Latine* and *Dalmatick*? As St. *Chrysostom* into the *Armenian*, As *Ulphilas* into the *Gothick*, Or as the Ancients did every one into his own Tongue. " For it was anciently done into many different " Tongues says *Hesychius* of *Jerusalem*: Into 72. " says *Anastasius* of *Antioch*: Into innumerable " Tongues says St. *Chrysostom*: Into the Langua- " ges of all Nations of the Earth, that had receiv'd the

Anastasius Patr. of Ant. apud Usserii Hist. Dogma. Multarum Gentium linguis Scriptura Translata docet falsa esse quæ addita sunt. Hieron Præfat. ad 4 Evang.

Sect. 4. c. 33. Sect. 6. c. 37. Plin. l. 2. c. 6. apud Usser. ibid.

" the Faith, ſays *Theodoret*: Yea into every Tongue " under the Sun ſays *Euſebius*. In ſhort even at this day, we have a Noble Monument of the Judgment and Practice of Antiquity, I mean the *Polyglot Bibles*: So that the Catholick Church in the Primitive Times, might have ſaid as the *Jews* did, 2d *Acts*, *That they heard and read every one in his own Tongue the wonderful Works and WORDS of God.* But ſetting aſide this, that it ſhould be lawful and ſafe to have the Scripture Tranſlated into *Latin* only, is to me a ſtrange *Paradox*. For what Priviledge has God beſtow'd on the *Latin* more than on other Tongues? All certainly one as well as the other are capable of Miſtakes and Corruptions. The *Hebrew* indeed had once the Honour of being the Holy Language and (as I may ſay,) the immediate Vehicle of the Divine Will. The *Greek* ſucceeded next into it's Room. The reaſon of both is obvious. The Word of God was firſt directly intended for the *Iſraelites* only, therefore firſt wrote in *their* Tongue: Afterwards for the whole World, therefore wrote in the moſt Vulgar and Common Language the *Greek*. Yet ſo as that by degrees it was Tranſlated into every Language, to the end, that *the Knowledge of the Lord might cover the Earth, as the Waters cover the Sea.* Iſ. 11. 9.

The Inſcription on the Croſs was wrote in *Latin*. True! But 'twas by the command of *Pontius Pilate*, that accurſed Crucifier of our Lord, in honour of his own Language, and for the better in-

His Country Men.

formation of the *Romans*. Yet who can ſay that the *Evangeliſts* in their *Greek*, and inſpired Hiſtories, continu'd it afterwards in the ſame *Latine* Tongue? I never yet ſomuch as heard of any M. S. or Printed *Greek* Teſtament with the *Latin* Inſcription retain'd in it. Moreover we know that as no *Hebrew* nor *Greek*, ſo no *Latin* Bible is an Original; nor indeed is there any ſuch thing as an Original at this day. All our Bibles, in whatever Language, are either Tranſlations or Tranſcripts, which is the ſame thing to our preſent purpoſe, both, as I ſaid, being liable to miſtakes.

Finally, then the Word of God is his Word, be it in what Language it will, and as much the Word of God in one, as in another, there being (as I have ſaid) no Original at this day. Briefly, one may add or diminiſh in Tranſcribing and Printing, as well as in Tranſlating: Therefore either both or neither are to be laid aſide.

6. It is not adding to the Word, when a new Prophet ariſing, delivers ſome further Meſſages to the Churches, which are affixt to the Canon of Scripture. For the Rule in the Text runs thus, *Thou ſhalt not add*, ſpeaking unto us Men. Nevertheleſs God may add to it when ever he pleaſes, and whatever he thinks fit. So that all the following Books of Scripture were, notwithſtanding my Text, added to the Canon unto the end of the *Revelations*, where (for ought we yet know) the Book

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is ſhut up in theſe Words. " For I certifie unto e-
" very Man, that heareth the Words of the Pro- *Rev.* 22.
" pheſie of this Book; if any Man ſhall add unto 18, 19.
" theſe things, God ſhall add unto him the Plagues
" that are written in this Book: And if any
" Man ſhall take away from the Words of the
" Book of this Propheſie, God ſhall take away
" his Part out of the Book of Life, and out of the
" Holy City, and from the things, which are writ-
" ten in this Book. Which brings me to the 2. Head;
ſc. To ſhew poſitively when we add or diminiſh ought from the Word of God. And firſt of Diminiſhing,

1. Then we diminiſh from the Word, when we caſt away any, never ſo little Part of it. Wonderful was the Care of the *Jews* herein, and Religious they were to Superſtition (as may be thought) counting the very Letters of the Bible to preſerve it intire. Hereunto our Lord alludes----*Till Heaven and Earth paſs away not one jott or tittle ſhall paſs from the Law.* *Mat.* 5. 18. Where tho' he is not ſpeaking of the outward Letter as I now am, but of the Intrinſick and Myſtical Truths, which were to be fulfilled in Chriſt, and ever to remain in force: Yet (however) he ſuits his Expreſſion unto the *Jews* Curioſity in keeping the Word from being diminiſht in the leaſt Point.

But yet Intereſt has a Byas. Inſtance M.ᵗ has charg'd the *Jews* home with this Practice inſtan- *Dial. cum Typh.*

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cing in ſeveral Paſſages out of *Ez. Neh.* the *Pſal. Iſa. Jer.* and *Ezek.* that were expung'd, becauſe they ſeem'd too plainly to point at Jeſus Chriſt. And all the World knows the Papiſts, in their Catechiſm at leaſt, have aſſum'd and exercis'd a like expurgatory Power, upon the ſecond Commandment. Much more,

2. Then we diminiſh from the Word, when we reject whole Books, as the *Sadducees* and *Samaritans* of Old did all but the 5. Books of *Moſes*, and as many over Subtil and Wickedly Critical Wits among the Chriſtians have done, calling into Queſtion many intire Books of the New Teſtament, and ſome there are who have endeavour'd to caſhiere 'em all. But,

3. We diminiſh from the Word, when we lay it aſide as not a Neceſſary, or not the Supreme Rule of Faith. This is to diminiſh from it's Authority. Some either Weak or Hypocritical Chriſtians in Times of Old deliver'd up their Bibles to their Perſecuters, and for ſo doing were Branded with that diſgraceful Name of Traditors, Traitors. And yet queſtionleſs they had, or might have had, the uſual Excuſes at hand, which are currant now adays. "That they had the Light "within 'em, to guide 'em into all Truth, That "they had other Lights without 'em, The Writ- "ings of Holy and Learned Men, The aſſi- "ſtance of Biſhops and Prieſts and the infallible "Popes,

" Popes, The daily Converſation of the Faith-
" ful, and the Decrees of Councils to direct and
" inſtruct 'em: Moreover, that the Truths and
" Myſteries of the Goſpel (whatever became of
" of the written Word) might be tranſmitted by
" Oral Tradition unto Poſterity; and upon the
" whole matter, that there was no neceſſity of
" the written Word of God. But theſe new Pre-
texts, notwithſtanding the Church, condemn'd their Treachery: All which ſhews that in the Judgment both of the Church, and of the Perſecuters too, neither the Light within, nor the Writings of Holy Men, nor the Decrees of Councils, nor the Infallibility of the Popes, nor Oral Tradition, nor all of 'em, were ſufficient to uphold the Doctrine of Chriſtianity; and this demonſtrates the neceſſity of the written Word of God, & that 'tis the only Neceſſary and Supreme Rule of Faith.

There is a pernicious Law among the *Romaniſts*, forbidding the People to Read the Scripture, which is a great Diminution of at leaſt the Honour, the Sufficiency and Perſpicuity of the Word.

'Tis pretended that it was found, *certiſſimo Experimento*, that ignorant and malicious Men did improve it unto Errours and Hereſies by miſtaking or depraving its meaning. But this is a meer ſhift to palliate the Injury done to the Word

Concil. Trid. Bellarmin. &c.

Word of God, contrary to the ſenſe and practice of all Antiquity. For our Predeceſſors in the Faith, I mean, the Ancient Fathers, this Obj. notwithſtanding, were wont conſtantly to call upon all the Faithful without diſtinction to read the Word, telling 'em, " It was not like " *Plato's* Philoſophy, or *Pythagoras's* Cryptical " Diſcipline, calculated for the Meridian of a " few of the Wiſer Sort; but fitted and deſign'd " for all to read and to underſtand, for the Wiſe " and for the Unwiſe, for Kings of the Earth & " for all People, for Souldiers and for Lawyers, " for Monks and for Citizens of the World, for " Prieſts and Laymen, for Husbandmen and " Mariners, Artificers and Labourers, for Young " Men and Maidens, Old Men and Children, " and in a word for all Qualities, Ages, Sexes, " Fortunes and Degrees of Men whatever; to " be read in Publick and in Private, and at all " times, as well at Home as Abroad, in the " Church, and in the Fields, and in the Deſarts, " and in Journeys, & in a word in every place.

Shall I, by the way, crave leave to offer you a Demonſtration (of my own for any thing that I know) againſt our Adverſaries *certiſſimum Experimentum*, and that out of the Scripture it ſelf too, becauſe I am now pleading in its behalf. See then the ſecond Epiſtle of *Peter* 1 chap. 19. *v. We have alſo a more ſure word of Propheſy where-*

unto

unto ye do well to take heed as unto a Light that shineth in a dark place, compar'd with the 16. *v.* of the 3*d* chap. of the same Epistle, *As also in all his Epistles, our beloved Brother* Paul *has written speaking in 'em of these things, in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unstable and unlearned wrest, as they do all the other Scriptures unto their own Destruction.* Out of which Passages I argue thus: "That which *Peter* the first Pope or Bi- *See* 4th
"shop of *Rome* (and *Paul* too) commended and *Col.* 16. &
"encourag'd the People to, (*sc.* to take heed or 17. *Acts*
"to give attendance unto the reading of the 11. *v.*
"Word, although it was known by most cer-
"tain Experience, that some wrested it to Errour
"and Heresy, and to their own Destruction) that
"ought not now be deny'd the People, because
"forsooth there be at this day also some among
"us that wrest it to their own Destruction: That
"which was not a competent Reason unto *Peter*,
"cannot be a sufficient Warrant unto his Succes-
"sors, to deprive the People of the Holy Scrip-
"tures: What *Peter* could not, would not, do, the
"Popes at this time of day cannot, should not,
"presume to do.

But above all, to advance a Supreme Infallible and Independent Authority in the Church, not Subordinate, yea Superiour, to the Scripture, with liberty even to contradict it, is certainly a diminishing of the Word, that is, its Soveraignty.

The Power of the Word is like God himſelf, *nec parem fert nec ſuperiorem.*

The Scripture is the intire body of the Divine Law, who then ſhall dare to Diminiſh ought from it, or thwart its Definitions? He that touches the apple of Gods Eye: He claims (as I may ſay) a ſhare in the Legiſlative, yea, and makes himſelf Superior even to God himſelf.

It was then an impudent Preſumption, *crimen læſæ Majeſtatis* in the Council of *Conſtance*, to take upon 'em to decree with a *non-obſtante*, that tho' the Scripture ſays, *Drink ye all of this*, yet the Laity (to whom alſo they confeſs it was ſpoken) ſhall not drink thereof. Thus they made the Word of God of none Effect by their Traditions, teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of Men, and declared 'emſelves above Jeſus Chriſt, that Canon being ſet above his Word by their own acknowledgment. And thus the Will and the Wiſdom of Men took place of the Wiſdom and Will of God.

What ſhall we then think of thoſe, who equal, nay prefer, the private Spirit of the Pope, and others the Light within 'emſelves, before the Word of God? St. *Peter* and the Believers he wrote to certainly had the Light within, and the Spirit in as great abundance as any at this time of day can pretend: And yet he tells his Flock---*That no Propheſy of Scripture is of any private Interpretation: That we have a more ſure Word of Propheſy whereunto we do well to take heed.* Tho'

2 Ep. 1. 19, 20. no not of Peter himſelf.

Tho' he had the Spirit and Light within, tho' he had the Honour and Advantage of ſeeing Chriſt Transfigur'd, and hearing the Voice from Heaven, ſaying----*This is my beloved Son*: Yet for v. 18. the proof of that very Propoſition himſelf relies and exhorts the Faithful to rely rather on the Word of Propheſy, the Scripture, as a more ſure Teſtimony. Surer than what? Why ſurer than any private Spirit or private Interpretation, tho' of the Infallible *peter* himſelf: Surer than ſeeing Chriſt's Transfiguration: Surer than hearing the Voice from Heaven: Surer than the Light within. So that the Light within and all other Lights without were Darkneſs, unleſs they took heed to that more ſure Word the Light of Gods Word. And yet the private Spirit and Light within, forſooth, or that Planetary and falſe Light of *peters* Succeſſors without, muſt in theſe unhappy days of ours give check to the plain Teſtimony of Scripture, and be preferr'd before it; As in the uſe of the Lords Supper, one Part whereof thoſe of the *Roman* Communion are depriv'd of. The *Quakers* reject both Sacraments: And the Lords Prayer many *Diſſenters* deſpiſe, and other things might be inſtanced in. In ſhort, what amounts all theſe ſpiritual Whymſeys to? But the ſetting up either that more dimn Light at *Rome*, or the private Light of every Mans own Breaſt at home above that more ſure Word of Scripture, *whereunto we ſhould do well to take heed.* This is juſt ſuch a-

nother piece of folly, as if a Man ſhould take his Journey in the night time by the dimn Light of the Moon, or by his own dark-Lanthorne in his hand, refuſing the Light of the Sun by Day, which notwithſtanding affords a much clearer Light and ſafer Conduct to the Traveller. Laſtly,

4. We diminiſh from the Word even when we preſume to add any thing to it. For this is as it were to tax it with ſome ſuppos'd Defects and Imperfections, which we, forſooth, would ſupply.

Now then as for adding to the Word in the firſt place.

1. We add to it when any thing is tackt unto the Word not belonging to it. Thus we reckon the *papiſts* to have made bold with the Scripture, thruſting the Apochryphal Books into the Canon of the Old Teſtament. But I haſten,

2. We both add to the Word and diminiſh from it, when we alter it, eſpecially ſo as that it carries quite another Senſe than what was intended by the Spirit of God. And now I am at length come to the Point I chiefly aim'd to inſiſt on. It is to be bewail'd, that ſo many various Readings have already been thruſt into the Sacred Text, no body knows certainly when, nor where, nor by whom, nor on what Occaſion, nor upon what Motive and Deſign. But I will not trouble you nor my ſelf about this, which is

not

not now to be remedy'd. I will rather advertiſe you of one of a freſher Date, which yet indeed has not, ought not to have the honour of pretending to a various Lection.

The caſe in ſhort is this. The Apoſtles 'emſelves had from the beginning exercis'd the Offices of Preaching the Word, of Adminiſtring the Sacraments and of Diſpenſing the Alms gather'd at the Lords Supper. But the Church multiplying and buſineſs increaſing upon their hands, there happen'd ſome Occaſion of Complaint about the unequal diſtribution of the ſaid Publick Alms. Whereupon the Apoſtles order'd the multitude, *To ſeek out Seven Men of Honeſt report, and full of the Holy Ghoſt and Wiſdome, whom* We (as ſome of our *Engliſh* Bibles have it or) *whom* Ye (as others) *may appoint over this buſineſs.* And hence a Queſtion may be ſtarted, whether the People or the Apoſtles did appoint thoſe Seven unto the Offices aforeſaid, and by conſequence, whether the People or the Biſhops have Authority to appoint the Parochial Miniſters. My buſineſs here is not to Argue that Point, but to Examin into this various Reading, which I ſhall do in reſolving three Enquiries. Acts. 6. 3.

1. Which of the two Readings is the true one? The Reſolution whereof is very eaſy. The Place ought to run thus---*Whom* We *may appoint over the buſineſs.* In proof of this (if any ſhould doubt it) I appeal to all the *MSS* and Printed Copies of the *Greek* Teſtament, I appeal to all the Collections of vari- We the Apoſtles.

ous.

ous Readings, I appeal to the Bibles into whatever Language Translated, I appeal to all the *English* Versions and Impressions till of late, and I appeal to the History of the whole Fact here laid down, which supposes it of necessity. The Apostles had had that Business of Distributing the publick Alms in their own hands from the beginning, therefore they (not the People) delegated the Seven to it: Therefore it's not to be read *Ye* but *We*. But then the next Enquiry is,

2. When did this Corruption steal first into the Text? Answer, I will not be peremptory in this: But so far as my Diligence and Observation (which has not been a little, and mannaged with all Care & Faithfulness) is able to carry me, I must say, that it crept in first in the Year 1638. In that very Year, there was a Fair Bible in Folio Printed at *Cambridge* with this *Erratum*, and this is the first time I have yet been able to discover the Corruption.

By Tho. Buck, *and* Rog. Daniel *Printers to the University: The latter of which was indeed the manager of the Press, and in the Interest of that Presbyterian Party.*

By the way, here I must beg your favourable Construction of this Remark. It is with the greatest Aversion and infinite Regret, that I am forced upon this occasion to bewray my own Nest, and to speak out this great Truth to at least the seeming Dishonour of my own Mother University, from whose Breasts I sucked in all that little Knowledge I pretend unto. And this too in the Presence and the Hearing of some of the most Ingenious and Learned Children of her Rival Sister, who has (for ought I can learn) been somewhat happier in this kind.

But

But, however, as to the Fact ſo it came to paſs, that while the chief Stewards of the Family were otherwiſe imploy'd, and the inferiour Servants (I think) ſleeping, the Enemy ſow'd theſe Tares, which have been growing ever ſince until now. This may ſuffice to point at the time when this Error firſt entr'd into our *Engliſh* Bibles, *ſc.* in the Year 38. But,

Who then brought in this falſe Reading, or what Party among us at leaſt encourag'd and promoted it ſince?

It is an Enquiry worthy to be made, and a clear and full diſcovery would deſerve an *Hecatomb*. And tho' I will not promiſe ſo much, yet ſomething I have to offer towards it, which tho' it amounts not to a direct Proof againſt any Perſons, yet I think may paſs for a good Circumſtantial One. To my purpoſe then,

I will not be ſo Poſitive as to Averr, that it was at firſt induſtriouſly done, yet I muſt call into Queſtion the Diſſenters, as Perſons ſuſpected to have ſecretly contributed to the Corruption of this Place, at leaſt, to the Continuance and Increaſe of it, and that upon the following Accompts.

1. Becauſe the Alteration happen'd in the Year 38. Presbytery being then in the Aſcendant, I ſay juſt in that nick of time, when all things were in Preparation, and tended to the Subverſion of Epiſcopacy, *Scotland* having already made a Conſpiracy, and bound 'emſelves under a Curſe to Extripate it, and *England*, even a great part of the Univerſities

ſi ies 'emſelves, running into the ſame exceſs of riot. So that here is a Concurrence of the Circumſtance of time, and a ſhrewd one too, ſufficient to ground a ſuſpicion on.

2. The Corruption in Appearance favours the Diſſenters and their Deſign againſt Epiſcopacy. If then any, they may be ſuſpected for being willing to have it at leaſt continu'd and propagated.

3. On the contrary, it cannot, with any Colour of Reaſon, be imagin'd, that the Epiſcopal Party deſign'd to Corrupt this Place, or to Connive at it's Corruption, except they ſhall be thought *Felones de ſe*, and willingly and knaviſhly to deſtroy what they endeavour zealouſly to eſtabliſh. Satan (as our Lord argues) cannot be thought to caſt out Satan, and to throw down his own Kingdom. Nor will any one of Senſe believe, that the Epiſcopal Party were willing to have that thruſt out of the Scripture, upon which their Church Government ſeems to be built; Or to ſubſtitute in its room, what in Appearance overthrows their Politie.

4. That Party ought in all Reaſon to be Suſpected of foul Play herein, who, admitting they did not at firſt on ſet, purpoſe, contrive the Corruption of this place, yet now, belike, contribute to the Confirming and Vindicating it, and under the Colour of this new Text of Scripture, aſſert and ſupport the new Popular Government of the Church, as ſome of the *Presbyterians* do at this day.

For the Proof of which Charge upon 'em, I need only

only to put you in mind of that memorable Story, which doubtleſs ye have many of you heard of, how that a *Cameronian* (one of the moſt rigid Sects of the *Scotch* Presbyterians) Preaching ſome years ſince concerning the Peoples Power of ſetting up their own Teachers, & having confirm'd his Point with ſome Reaſons of his own (the Principal whereof was, I gueſs, that it was moſt agreeable to the Inclination of the *Scotch* Nation, which is juſt ſuch another Reaſon as an Adulterer alſo might give for his Wantonneſs.)

But, I ſay, having prov'd his Point as he thought (no matter to us how) at length bid his Audience not to believe him, but to turn to their Bible, and ſo ſent them incontinently to the 6. *Act.* 3. *v.* where they might find their Character in theſe Words---*Whom* YE (the Multitude of Believers) *may appoint over this Buſineſs.* But whether this be a good Character, or has on it the ſtamp of Divine Anthority, let the World judge by what has been already ſaid. For a Concluſion then I would crave leave to addreſs,

1. Unto all the Faithful in general; Men, Brethren and Fathers ſuffer me to entreat you in a few words, with all diligence, to preſerve the Word of God pure and uncorrupt. If once the Fountain-head be poyſon'd, the Streams will be ſo too, and from thenceforth we ſhall never be able to diſtinguiſh between the Doctrines and Will of God, and the Inventions and Inclinations of Men. The Adverſaries of Chriſtianity, with deſign to overthrow

the whole Frame of our Religion, have already endeavour'd to take advantage of those numerous and various Lections, which in times of darkness and ignorance heretofore stole into the *Greek* Testament (as I find it taken notice of in a Learned Preface to a late Edition) what then will they say, when they observe the purest Kirk in the World (as is pretended) tampering with, and refining upon, the Word of God at this time of day? But let not us, to serve a Cause, or to draw the simple People into our Interests, let not us (I say) dare to suborn any false Witness whatever, much less out of the Word of Truth. Let us leave that vile Artifice to our Adversaries on both hands. Truth needs not such feeble Supports, but is indeed very much disparag'd and weaken'd thereby. The brightest Truth will receive prejudice when we go about to establish it by a Lie, much more Points in Controversy, when they are varnish'd and washt over with false and fading Colours. *'Tis our Interest therefore*, as well as our Duty---- *To lay aside all Guile and Hypocrisie*, and to feed our Flocks with *the sincere Milk of the Word. To put away Lying, and to speak every Man Truth with his Neighbour.* Let us take to our selves the Example of St. *Paul*---- *We are not* (says he reflecting upon the *Corinthian* Schismaticks) *as many which corrupt the Word of God: But as of Sincerity, but as of God in the sight of God, speak we in Christ.* And once more he saith---- *We have renounced the hidden things of Dishonesty, not walking in Craftiness, nor handling*

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1 Pet. 2. 1, 2.

Eph. 4. 25.

1 Cor. 2. 17.

c. 4. 2.

ling the Word of God deceitfully; but by manifeſtation of the Truth. The Apoſtle not obſcurely hinting in theſe Words, that the *Separatiſts* at *Corinth* did ſo.

2. But above all, and with all Submiſſion, I would beg of thoſe, who are in Authority, and do humbly propoſe, that ſome effectual courſe be taken to make amends for this at firſt (I am willing to believe) unfortunate overſight committed (I am aſham'd to repeat where) and to vindicate this Place in the *Acts* from the Injury it has ſuffer'd theſe Fifty Years paſt, and upward. How it may in ſome meaſure be repair'd is not hard to tell. I have heard of a whole Impreſſion of the Bible condemn'd to be burnt, becauſe the Negative Particle of a Commandment was caſually left out. What then if one of every Edition thus deprav'd, or at leaſt one for all, were ſerv'd after the ſame manner *in perpetuam rei Memoriam*, and to expoſe the craftineſs of thoſe *Circumcellians* among us, who to advance their deſign, do not ſtick, it ſeems, to promote it by Falſhood; and grounding 'emſelves upon a meer Errour of the Preſs, as we will ſuppoſe it was at firſt, deceiving, and being deceived, do lie againſt the Holy Ghoſt, and bring a Scandal upon the Word of God, and our holy Religion.

To Conclude, I may happily ſeem too Warm and Zealous in this matter. Doubtleſs, ſome will think ſo. But upon Examination, having found the firſt accidental ſlip repeated ſince in at leaſt half a dozen Impreſſions of the Bible here in *England*,

land, and having now just Reason to suspect the *Scotch* Bibles generally faulty in this Passage, I cannot Imagine, but it has been a good while underhand countenanc'd and abetted: For is it Possible to believe, that One unhappy mistake should be so successful, as to have got into so many Editions without the helping hand of some wily and undermining Schismatick.

But principally, whereas now it begins to be avow'd for good and vendible Ware, expos'd and sold publickly in the Market, can any One continue to believe it still an Unwilling and Excusable Error? Or rather, is it not fit to be treated as Counterfeit and forbidden Commodities are? That is, in plain terms (as I said) cast into the Fire.

Moreover (for any thing I can foresee) it may, if not timely prevented, plead Prescription, and set up for Authentic, at least, for a various Lection, whereby the Popular Government of the Church, may, in a few more Years, gain an Appearance of Divine Authority, and the *Scot's* Inclination be thought Apostolical Institution.

All which consider'd, the Warmth I have shew'd upon this Occasion (if any before accounted it such) will now, I hope, be allow'd Reasonable and not Unserviceable to the Word and to the Church of God, to this Part of it especially among us, by Law Divine & Human Establish'd. And long may it be so to the Glory of God, & to the Edification of the Church in Peace & Love in Truth & Unity. *Amen.*

FINIS.